

## Message Text

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ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05  
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02  
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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3696  
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY JAKARTA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY MANILA PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY PORT MORESBY PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON PRIORITY  
CINCPAC HONOLULU HI  
USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 CANBERRA 5185

PORT MORESBY PLEASE PASS TO ASST/SEC HOLBROOKE; CINCPAC FOR  
POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: SREF, VN, AS  
SUBJ: US-AUSTRALIAN CONSULTATIONS ON REFUGEES

1. SUMMARY: IN LENGTHY AND EXTREMELY CANDID SESSIONS  
GOA LAID OUT THEIR ANALYSES OF THE INDOCHINESE REFUGEE  
PROBLEM AND THEIR FORECASTS FOR ITS FUTURE UNFOLDING.  
LOWMAN TALKED FOR AN HOUR WITH IMMIGRATION MINISTER  
MICHAEL MACKELLAR, HAD TWO SMALL SESSIONS (WORKING LUNCH  
AND DINNER) WITH THE HIGHEST IMMIGRATION AND FOREIGN  
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AFFAIRS OFFICIALS, PLUS TWO LONG WORKING SESSIONS WITH  
DESK LEVEL OFFICIALS FROM DFA AND IMMIGRATION. GOA SHARES  
OUR PESSIMISM THAT THERE WILL BE AN EARLY DIMINUTION  
OF THE REFUGEE FLOW BUT CONTINUES TO BE PREPARED TO  
SHARE THE BURDEN OF ACCEPTING THEM WITH US; THERE WERE  
INTIMATIONS THAT THEY MIGHT BE PREPARED TO TAKE AN  
EVEN LARGER NUMBER, BUT ONLY IF THE US AND OTHERS DID

THE SAME, AND ONLY UNDER CHANGED PROCEDURES WITH RESPECT TO GOA'S HITHERTO READY ACCEPTANCE OF REFUGEES ARRIVING DIRECTLY IN AUSTRALIA. DURING DINNER THAT RAN FOR NEARLY FIVE HOURS ON JUNE 30, SENIOR OFFICIALS DIDN'T EVEN ATTEMPT TO DISGUISE THEIR ALMOST PARANOID CONCERN ABOUT THE PRECEDENT BEING SENT BY ASIANS JUMPING THE QUEUE. END SUMMARY.

2. LOWMAN BEGAN BY DESCRIBING THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THAILAND, MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE. REFUGEES CONTINUE TO LEAVE THE THREE INDOCHINESE COUNTRIES IN NUMBERS SUBSTANTIALLY HIGHER THAN WERE FORESEEN A YEAR AGO, WHEN US PROGRAMS WERE DEVELOPED. DESPITE SOME SLACKENING IN BOAT CASES ARRIVING IN THAILAND, THEIR NUMBERS HAVE BEEN TAKEN UP ELSEWHERE, NOTABLY SOUTHERN MALAYSIA AND HONG KONG. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE EVIDENCE THAT MANY ARRIVE IN THE VICINITY OF SINGAPORE BUT ARE "DISCOURAGED" FROM LANDING THERE. AND OF ESPECIAL INTEREST HERE, IT IS CLEAR THAT THE NUMBERS SAILING DIRECTLY TO AUSTRALIA, WITH OR WITHOUT INTERMEDIATE STOPS IS NOT LESSENING. THAIL OFFICIALS HAVE NOT AS YET APPROVED ANY SIGNIFICANT RESETTLEMENT EFFORT FOR LAND CASES AND THE ATTITUDE OF ALL COUNTRIES OF FIRST ASYLUM AGAINST RESETTLING ANY BOAT REFUGEES AT ALL REMAINS ABSOLUTELY FIRM. FOR OUR PART, WE HAD NOT EXPECTED FLOWS OF THE CURRENT MAGNIUDE AND IF THEY CONTINUE, OUR EXISTING PROGRAM

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WILL BE CLEARLY INADEQUATE. BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE, LOWMAN STRESSED, THAT WE HAVE ADEQUATE EVIDENCE TO SPEAK WITH ANY ASSURANCE ABOUT EXPECTED REFUGEE FLOWS IN THE PROXIMATE FUTURE AND WE DO NOT BELIEVE WE WILL HAVE A HANDLE ON THIS FOR ABOUT ANOTHER FOUR MONTHS. WHILE WE SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLE OF INTER-NATIONALIZING THE REFUGEE EFFORT, WE ARE RELUCTANT TO SEE AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE THAT WOULD SIMPLY ANTAGONIZE THE FRENCH (WHO FOR DOMESTIC REASONS CANNOT "PLEDGE" TO TAKE FIXED HIGH LEVELS OF REFUGEES), RAISE UNCERTAINTIES IN THE MINDS OF MALAYSIANS, SINGAPOREANS, THAIS AND OTHERS WHO HAVE THUS FAR CONTINUED TO BE HELPFUL, OR REVEAL TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE ANY SUBSTANTIAL DEGREE OF DISARRAY AMONG THE PRIMARY RECIPIENTS OF REFUGEES. THUS, ANY SUCH INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS SHOULD BE RELATIVELY LOW KEY AND LIMITED IN SCOPE AND AIM UNTIL WE CAN SEE WHERE WE ARE GOING.

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FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 3 CANBERRA 5185

PORT MORESBY PLEASE PASS TO ASST/SEC HOLBROOKE; CINCPAC FOR  
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3. MACKELLAR, AND IN SUCCESSION, EVERY SUCCEEDING HIGH-  
RANKING GOA OFFICIAL WHO MET WITH LOWMAN, SPELLED OUT  
THREE CARDINAL CONCERNS. FIRST( AND CLEARLY FOREMOST,  
IN THEIR MINDS), " WHERE DOES THIS ALL END" -- HOW MANY  
ARE LIKELY TO COME OUT AND AT WHAT RATE. AUSTRIAN  
PUBLIC OPINION IS FAIRLY CLOSE TO THE TOLERANCE LIMIT  
ALTHOUGH IT RECOGNIZED ITS OBLIGATION, ON BOTH HUMANI-  
TARIAN AND POLITICAL GROUNDS, TO DO ITS SHARE. SECOND,  
THERE IS A SUBSTANTIAL BODY OF OPINION WITHIN THE GOA  
WHICH ARGUES THAT MANY OF THE REFUGEES CAN ALSO BE  
DESCRIBED AS "ECONOMIC" MIGRANTS -- PEOPLE WHO HAVE LEFT  
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THEIR COUNTRY BECAUSE THEY COULD NO LONGER ENJOY THE  
ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL STATUS THEY HAD BEFORE, WHOSE  
PROPERTY (INCLUDING BUSINESSES OR PROFESSIONS) HAD BEEN  
TAKEN AWAY FROM THEM AND WHO WERE FORCED BY THE NEW

REGIMES TO WORK IN OCCUPATIONS THEY DID NOT CARE TO. TO THE DEGREE THAT THEY RESISTED THIS (AS WELL AS TO THE DEGREE THAT THEY HAD PREVIOUSLY ENJOYED A MIDDLE OR UPPER CLASS EXISTENCE) THEY WERE PERSECUTED. THE GOA ACCEPTS OUR ARGUMENTS THEY WERE PERSECUTED. THE GOA ACCEPTS OUR ARGUMENTS TO THE CONTRARY WHICH WERE PERSUASIVELY PUT BY LOWMAN BUT IT IS CLEAR THAT THEY WILL HAVE TO CONTINUE TO FIGHT A REAR-GUARD DEFENSE AGAINST THOSE WITHIN THE GOA AS WELL AS IN THE AUSTRALIAN BODY POLITIC WHO DO NOT SHARE THE VIEW THAT AUSTRALIA SHOULD BE ACCEPTING LARGE NUMBERS OF INDOCHINESE. AND THIRD, THE GOA WAS EXTREMELY INTERESTED IN WHAT THE SRV WAS DOING TO HALT THE REFUGEE FLOW, AND, BY EXTENSION CONCERNED ABOUT WHAT IT MIGHT HAVE TO DO ON ITS OWN TO STEM THE FLOW OF "DIRECT BOAT CASES" TO UNDERSCORE THE PRINCIPLE OF AUSTRALIA'S RIGHT TO DETERMINE ITS OWN CONDITIONS OF ENTRY ONTO ITS TERRITORY.

4. IN SUM, THE GOA'S MAJOR PREOCCUPATION AT THIS POINT IS STEMMING THE DIRECT BOAT CASES. THEY FREELY CONCEDE THAT NUMBERS WERE NOT THEIR PRINCIPAL PROBLEM; THEY WERE HAVING LITTLE SERIOUS DIFFICULTY HANDLING THE REFUGEES COMING HERE, AND ADMITTED THAT THE ARGUMENTS AGAINST TAKING INDOCHINESE REFUGEES FROM CAMPS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA WERE RELATIVELY EASILY DEALT WITH BY THEM. THEY WERE NOT SUGGESTING AT THIS POINT THAT THE US DO MORE, ALTHOUGH THEY DID HOPE THAT BY MOVING FASTER WE WOULD HELP LIMIT THE NUMBERS OF REFUGEES TEMPTED TO SAIL DIRECTLY TO AUSTRALIA OUT OF FRUSTRATION

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WITH US PROCEDURES. THEY CLEARLY RECOGNIZED THE PRACTICAL LIMITS TO WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED OF OTHER COUNTRIES (I.E., THERE ARE REALLY ONLY FOUR OF US IN THIS GAME --THE US, AUSTRALIA, FRANCE AND CANADA). THEY ARE TOYING WITH VARIOUS IDEAS OF HOW TO STOP THE DIRECT FLOWS, INCLUDING SENDING BACK TO MANILA ANY WHO COME DIRECTLY FROM THE PHILIPPINES; PERSUADING THE INDONESIANS TO HOLD BOATS EN ROUTE; SETTING UP ISLAND CAMPS SUCH AS ST. JOHN'S OFF SINGAPORE AND OTHERS IN MALAYSIA TO HELP RELIEVE THE FRUSTRATIONS OF REFUGEES ABOUT LACK OF MOVEMENT (THE GOA'S IDEAS ON THESE POINTS WERE NOT WELL-DEVELOPED, AND LOWMAN NOTED THAT, WHILE PERHAPS WORTH EXPLORING, TOO MUCH SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED OF SUCH STRATEGEMS.) GOA IMMIGRATION OFFICIALS EVEN APPEAR TO BE TOYING WITH THE IDEA, IF THERE IS NO CLEAR INDICATION OF A LESSENING OF THE OVERALL INDOCHINESE REFUGEE PROBLEM WITHIN 4-6 MONTHS, OF AT SOME POINT IDENTIFYING SOME OF THE REFUGEES WHO SAIL DIRECTLY HERE AS "ECONOMIC MIGRANTS" AND SHIPPING THEM OUT TO MAKE THE POINT THAT

"RIGHT OF ENTRY INTO AUSTRALIA IS SOMETHING THAT IS EXERCISED BY THE AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT ON BEHALF OF THE AUSTRALIAN PEOPLE -- IT IS NOT SOMETHING FREELY AVAILABLE TO PEOPLE WHO WANT TO COME HERE AND DO SO ON THEIR OWN." HOW THEY WOULD GET THE REFUGEES BACK ONTO BOATS OR PLANES OR WHO THEY WOULD PERSUADE TO TAKE THEM ARE UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS..

5. FINALLY, THE POSSIBILITY OF DECLARING AUSTRALIA THE "PORT OF FIRST ASYLUM" AND THE US AGREEING TO TAKE SOME OF THE REFUGEES WHO COME DIRECTLY HERE WAS DISCUSSED. THIS WOULD NOT BE FOR THE PURPOSE OF CUTTING DOWN THE NUMBER AUSTRALIA ACCEPTS BUT RATHER TO ESTABLISH THE POINT THAT AUSTRALIA IS NOT OBLIGED TO ACCEPT EVERYONE WHO SHOWS UP AT HER DOORS. THIS WOULD REQUIRE A DECISION ON THE PART OF THE GOA TO PLACE REFUGEES ARRIVING DIRECTLY IN AUSTRALIA IN A CAMP SITUATION UNDER UNHCR, A MOVE THEY A  
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ARE NOT AT THIS POINT PREPARED TO MAKE. POLITICALLY, THIS WOULD BE VERY HELPFUL TO THE GOA, AND IS SOMETHING WE MAY WISH TO GIVE FURTHER THOUGHT TO.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 3 OF 3 CANBERRA 5185

PORT MORESBY PLEASE PASS TO ASST/SEC HOLBROOKE; CINCPAC FOR  
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6. THE STRENGTH AND DEPTH OF AUSTRALIAN FEARS ABOUT  
THE EXTREMELY DAMAGING PRECEDENT BEING SET BY LARGE  
NUMBERS OF REFUGEES SAILING DIRECTLY TO AUSTRALIA TOOK  
US A BIT ABACK. ALTHOUGH THE EMBASSY HAD BEEN EXPOSED  
TO THIS ATTITUDE BEFORE, THE GOA OFFICIALS WHO MET WITH  
LOWMAN REPEATEDLY HAMMERED HOME THEIR  
BELIEF THAT AUSTRALIA IS AN "ENCLAVE"  
IN AN ASIAN AREA THAT COULD BE SWAMPED -- OVER-RUN --  
IF THE PRECEDENT SET BY VIETNAMESE DIRECT ARRIVALS WERE  
TO BE EMULATED BY SUBSEQUENT WAVES OF THAI OR MALAYSIANS  
IN SIMILAR CIRCUMSTANCES, OR BY INDONESIANS OR FILIPINOS  
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OR EVEN MINORITY GROUPS WITHIN THOSE COUNTRIES FLEEING  
PERSECUTION. AUSTRALIANS ARE CLEARLY VERY DISTURBED ABOUT  
THIS SPECTRE - "FRIGHTENED" IS NOT TOO STRONG A WORD --  
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME, THE GOA APPEARS TO BE THINKING  
ABOUT DIRECT MEASURES THEY MAY HAVE TO TAKE TO UNDERScore  
THEIR DETERMINATION TO BE THE ARBITER OF WHO SHOULD BE  
INVITED TO THESE SHORES, AND WHO SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO STAY  
IF THEY COME UNINVITED. NEEDLESS TO SAY, ANY ACT THE GOA  
TOOK WHICH COULD BE PORTRAYED AS A REVERSION TO THE FORMER  
"WHITES ONLY" IMMIGRATIONPOLICY WOULD BE EXTREMELY  
DAMAGING. WE WILL NEED TO BE THINKING OF WAYS TO HELP  
THE AUSTRALIANS IN THIS RESPECT IF THEY ARE NOT TO FEEL  
OBLIGED TO TAKE DIRECT MEASURES WHICH COULD SEVERELY  
DAMAGE THEIR (AND, BY EXTENSION, OUR) STANDING BOTH  
GENERALLY.

7. WE AGREE TO STAY IN CLOSE TOUCH WITH EACH OTHER WITH  
REGULAR HIGH-LEVEL CONSULTATIONS AT APPROXIMATELY SIX-  
MONTH INTERVALS. THE AUSTRALIANS AGREED THAT PROVIDED  
THE REFUGEE OUTFLOW DOES NOT MEASURABLY WORSEN, THEY CAN  
PROBABLY HOLD THE LINE WITH NO CHANGES IN THEIR PRESENT  
POLICY FOR ANOTHER FOUR MONTHS. BY OCTOBER, HOWEVER,  
THEY WILL PROBABLY HAVE TO CONDUCT A MAJOR REVIEW OF THE  
MATTER.  
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## Message Attributes

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**TAGS:** SREF, PORO, AS, VM, XC, XD, UN  
**To:** STATE  
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